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To: College Health Service Directors

From: Marie O'Donnell
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Date: September 15, 2005

Re: State Immunization Requirements for Students Displaced by Hurricane Katrina

A number of students displaced by Hurricane Katrina are arriving at area colleges and universities. Many of these students do not have access to their immunization or health records. States affected by Hurricane Katrina have immunization requirements for school, as well as college entry, that are similar to Massachusetts and it is likely that students from these states are vaccinated appropriately.

In Massachusetts, immunization requirements for students attending postsecondary institutions apply to those students "attending or visiting classes or programs as part of a formal academic visitation or exchange program" (105 CMR 220.600). It is the determination of the Massachusetts Department of Public Health (MDPH) that these students arriving from the affected areas are being placed in Massachusetts on a temporary basis, as part of a humanitarian response to a natural disaster, and **not** as part of a formal academic visitation or exchange program. Therefore, they are not subject to the college immunization requirements.

Even though there are no official immunization requirements for these students, MDPH recommends that as institutions receive the immunization records for them, the records should be assessed for compliance with the current immunization requirements. Students should not be excluded if they are missing immunizations. If possible, these students should be vaccinated either through the college health services or referred to a local health care provider.

However, at some point, if immunization records are still not available, students may need to be immunized (or re-immunized). We recommend waiting initially until January 2006 to see if the immunization records will be recovered, and we will provide additional recommendations if the records are still not accessible at that point in time. We hope to be able to access data from the affected states during the recovery process.

If you have questions, please contact MDPH's Division of Epidemiology and Immunization at 617-983-6800.